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Roy Rogers

KING OF THE COWBOYS

IN
POISONED
WATER

COME ON IN OUT OF THE SUN, BOY, AND CHOW THE FAT WITH ME! IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME---

I'LL BE IN LATER, JIM... I THINK YOU'VE GOT ANOTHER GALLER!

SHERIFF LANDRY: I AM KENNETH BRANT, FROM THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION... MAY I SPEAK WITH YOU IN YOUR OFFICE?

WHY---WHY SURELY, MR BRANT! STEP RIGHT INSIDE---

SHERIFF LANDRY, THE GALADEN DEFENSE PLANT AT BOODIN, BELOW THE RESERVOIR, IS FACING A GRAVE THREAT! YOUR HELP MAY BE IMPORTANT IN REMOVING IT.

YUMM! I'M AT YOUR ORDERS! WHAT'S HAPPENED?

---AND YOU, ROY ROGERS, STICK AROUND FOR A FEW MINUTES! YOU'RE STILL CARRYING ONE OF MY DEPUTY BADGES, AND YOU'RE TAKING ORDERS!

DEAR JIM!

AN ASSISTANT ENGINEER IN CHARGE OF THE PLANT'S WATER SYSTEM WAS FOUND INTOXICATED YESTERDAY! HE HAD SHUT OFF THE CHLORINATING APPARATUS, AND A TEST SHOWED THE WATER LOADED WITH THE DEADLY GERMS OF ANTHRAX!

ANTHRAX? GOOD GRIEF! WE STOPPED THAT KILLER
OUT OF THE COW COUNTRY YEARS AGO! WHERE'D IT
COME FROM?

THERE'S A MAN OUTSIDE WHO KNOWS IT
EVEN BETTER THAN I DO---ONE OF MY
DEPUTIES---ROY ROGERS! HE'S A LOCAL
RANCHER, TOO ...
I'LL CALL
HIM IN!

THAT'S THE
QUESTION YOU MAY
HELP US TO ANSWER,
SHERIFF! YOU KNOW
THIS COUNTRY---



FIVE MINUTES LATER, ROY HAS THE WHOLE STORY...

THE PLANT'S POLLUTED SYSTEM
HAS BEEN SHUT OFF---WATER
IS BEING THUCKED IN NOW
BUT UNTIL WE KNOW HOW
THE GERMS GOT THERE,
WE CAN'T PREVENT IT FROM
HAPPENING AGAIN!

ESPECIALLY IF THE
GERMS WERE PUT
THERE!

YOU'VE CHECKED THE
RESERVOIR AND THE
INLET FOR DEAD
ANIMALS---OR TRACKS
THAT MIGHT SHOW
WHERE SOMETHING
WAS DUMPED IN?

WE'VE CHECKED
EVERYTHING,
ROGERS---
EVEN THE
CHANCE THAT
A PLANE
MIGHT HAVE
DONE IT!
THERE'S NOT
A CLUE!



YOU KNOW WHO WE'RE UP
AGAINST, GENTLEMEN! IF YOU
GET ANY IDEAS---OR STILL
BETTER, EVIDENCE---THAT
MIGHT HELP CONTACT ME AT
ONCE.

WE'LL DO
THAT, MR. DRANT
SO LONG...

ALL RIGHT, ROY---
SPILL IT! WHEN
YOU'RE LOOKING
THOUGHTFUL LIKE
THAT, I KNOW
SOMETHING IS
COOKING!

IT'S JUST
A STORY THAT
I HAPPEDED
TO RECALL, JIM!
I'D RATHER
NOT TELL YOU
ANY MORE,
YET...

---BUT I THINK THE
FIRST THING I'LL DO
IS TO GET BULLET
AND TRIGGER AND
MYSELF INOCULATED
AGAINST ANTHRAX!



TWO DAYS LATER---HIGH
ON THE MOUNTAIN
WATERSHED---AT
SUNDOWN...



UP OVER THIS RIDGE, WE'LL SIGHT
THE HOGANS OF OLD NATHAN'S
PEOPLE, TRIGGER.

NATHAN WAS ALWAYS A
GREAT HUNTER, AND STORY-
TELLER! IF THE ONE HE
TOLD ME OVER THE CAMP-
FIRE---ABOUT THE
MOUNTAIN SPRING THAT
OVES UNDERGROUND---
IS TRUE, IT MAY BE THE
CLUE TO THE POISONING
OF THE RESERVOIR.



THAT'S QUIET! NOBODY'S IN SIGHT AROUND THE
HOGANS!



ALL THE DOORS ARE SHUT! THAT
MEANS THEY'RE WITH US COMING---
AND THEY'RE TREATING ME AS A
STRANGER...



NATHAN! AHHHH!
HOSTEEN NEZH! WHY
DO YOU HIDE AMONG
THE ROCKS AND
KEEPING CLOSED
DOORS? I AM ROY---
YOUR FRIEND!

GO HOME, WHITE MAN!
WE DON'T KNOW YOU!



IN FLUENT NAVAJO, ROY ANSWERS...

I KNOW YOUR VOICE, HOSTEEN
NEZH! TELL ME WHAT IS WRONG!
AT LEAST LET ME SPEAK WITH OLD
NATHAN---



NAZHINI LIES DYING IN HIS HOGAN! IF YOU ENTER IF YOU STAY UNTIL YOU DIE OF SPIRIT-SICKNESS! GO NOW, OR WE SHOOT!



YOU WILL NOT SHOOT ME IN THE BACK, HOSTEEN NEZH---AND I AM GOING TO SEE NAZHINI---NOW!



WE'VE RUN INTO SOMETHING UFFY QUER, GALLEY! THESE INDIANS ARE SUPERSTITIOUS---BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM SO BADLY SCARED...



NAZHINI! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, OLD FRIEND?

BLOOD POISONING! BRING ME A DRINK OF WATER, ROY--- FROM THE QULLA NEAR THE DOOR.



BLOOD POISONING, EMP' I'LL LOOK AT THAT FOOT...



ANTHRAX! WHERE DID YOU GET THAT, NAZHINI?

FROM THE BEAR WALKER WHO LIVES IN SPIRIT CAVE! DO YOU THINK I AM DYING, ROY ROGERS?



NO---YOU'RE NOT DYING, NAZHINI! I THINK YOU'RE BEGINNING TO FIGHT OFF THE BLOOD POISONING... BUT TELL ME ABOUT THIS 'BEAR WALKER' SPOOK---IF HE IS A SPOOK?

YOU SHALL JUDGE FOR YOURSELF, ROY! I WILL TELL YOU WHAT I KNOW...



ONE MOON AGO, FOUR STRANGERS CAME HUNTING FOR BONES OF LONG-DEAD BEASTS---SO THEY TOLD OUR PEOPLE



"THEY GAINED BY THE SPRING THAT RUSHES FROM THE CLIFF NEAR SPIRIT CAVE---AND DIVES UNDERGROUND AGAIN..."

HAZHEM! IS THAT THE MYSTERIOUS SPRING THAT HELPS TO FEED THE BIG RESERVOIR AT BOGOM?"

YES---THAT IS THE LEGEND TOLD AMONG MY PEOPLE! A WHITE-TAILED SQUIRREL ONCE DROWNED IN THE SPRING---AND WAS FOUND FLOATING IN THE LAKE WHERE THE RESERVOIR NOW IS.



SO ON, HAZHEM! TELL ME THE REST ABOUT THE FOUR STRANGERS! WHAT BECAME OF THEM? AND WHAT HAD THEY TO DO WITH THE BEAR WALKER?"



ONE MORNING, TWO SQUADS WENT TO BRING WATER FROM THE SPRING THAT DIVES UNDERGROUND...THEY FOUND FOUR DEAD HORSES FLOATING THE STREAM! THE FOUR STRANGERS HAD DISAPPEARED.



OUR PEOPLE WERE FRIGHTENED---BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED THE STRANGERS HAD WANDERED INTO SPIRIT CAVE AND DIED, AND WOULD HAUNT THE COUNTRY AS GHOSTS! THAT NIGHT, WE BUILT A FIRE TO KEEP THE GHOSTS AWAY.



THE NEXT EVENING, AS WE WERE ABOUT TO LIGHT THE BONFIRE---

HEARREN, O PEOPLE
OF HAZHRI! I HAVE
A QUARREL WITH
YOU!

THE FOUR STRANGERS HAD POLLUTED
THE SPRING-THAT-DIVES-UNDERGROUND,
AND HAVE OFFENDED THE EARTH
SPIRITS! THEY HAVE PAID WITH
THEIR LIVES--- BUT YOU, TOO,
ARE TO BLAME FOR NOT
DRIVING THEM AWAY.

"---THE BEAR WALKER APPEARED, GLOWING WITH A GHOSTLY LIGHT!
OUR LEGENDS SAY THAT SUCH A ONE LIVES IN THE CAVE OF SPIRITS."

"THE BEAR
WALKER TOLD US,
FRIEND BOY, THAT
EVERY NIGHT, AS A
SACRIFICE TO THE
EARTH SPIRITS, A
LIVING SHEEP MUST
BE TIED OUTSIDE
THE SHIRT CAVE---"
OR ELSE ONE OF
OUR PEOPLE WOULD
SICKEN AND DIE!
HE SAID ALSO THAT
NO ONE MUST LOOK
WITHIN SIGHT OF
THE CAVE AFTER
LEAVING THE SHEEP
THERE! HAVING
SAID THIS, HE WENT
AWAY.



"MY PEOPLE WERE BASILY FRIGHTENED!
OUR SHEEP ARE OUR LIVING, BUT WE
DARED NOT DISOBEY! WE DREW LOTS
TO SEE WHOSE SHEEP MUST GO.



"THE EVENING CAME WHEN I DREW
THE STICK WITH THE WHITE END
FROM THE FIST OF HOSSTEEN
NEEN.



"I TOOK THE
POOREST OF
MY FLOCK---"



"---AND TIED IT TO A BRUSH JUST OUTSIDE THE
CAVE! I DID NOT FEEL FRIGHTENED, BECAUSE I HAD
A PLAN, AND BECAUSE I SMELLED SOMETHING.



"AMONG THE ROCKS, WITHIN SIGHT OF THE CAVE'S MOUTH, I LAY DOWN TO WATCH MY SHEEP..."



"AFTER A TIME, I SAW THE GHOSTLY, GLOWING SHAPE OF BEAR WALKER COME OUT OF SPIRIT CAVE. BUT I STILL DID NOT FEEL AFRAID."



"I WATCHED HIM CARRY MY SHEEP INSIDE..."



"WAITING A LITTLE LONGER, I GOT UP AND FOLLOWED HIM!"



"BUT I DID NOT GET FAR INSIDE! AS I PUT MY FOOT DOWN, SOMETHING PRICKED THROUGH THE SOLE OF MY MOGGASIN!"



"THERE WERE MANY LITTLE SHARP POINTS, LIKE RINGS, STUCK FIRMLY TO THE ROCKY FLOOR OF THE ENTRANCE! NOT WISHING TO STEP ON ANY MORE OF THEM, I RETURNED HOME."

THE NEXT DAY, ROY, THE BEAR WALKER STARTED TO WORK IN MY FOOT. WHEN I COULD NO LONGER WALK, MY PEOPLE SHUT ME IN HERE WITH FOOD AND WATER --- TO DIE! THEY SAID IT WAS BEAR WALKER'S CURSE.



UHHHHHHH! YOU WEREN'T AFRAID OF BEAR WALKER! MIND TELLING ME WHY?

BECAUSE HE SPOKE WITH THE LIP OF JAMPING JONGLE! A NO-GOOD HALF-BREED BOY THAT WE ONCE SHELTERED! AND BECAUSE WHEN I TOOK MY SHEEP TO SPIRIT GAVE, I SMELLED WHITE MAN'S DOCKING!



HERE IS THE THING THAT PRICKED MY FOOT! BE CAREFUL OF IT!

A CARPET TACK! COVERED WITH ANTHRAX GERMS! THIS WHOLE THING BEGINS TO MAKE SENSE, NAZIN, OLD FRIEND!



TELL ME HOW TO REACH SPIRIT GAVE! I'M GOING, TONIGHT---

---AND GET SHOT BY MY PEOPLE THE INSTANT YOU STEP OUT OF MY DOOR? THEY ARE CLOSE ENOUGH TO SHOOT, EVEN IN THE DARK---



NO, ROY! THE BEAR WALKER HAS TRAPPED YOU--- THROUGH THE FEARS OF MY PEOPLE! THEY THINK YOU, TOO, MUST DIE, SHARING MY CURSE--- OR ELSE, THEY ALL WILL GET THE SICKNESS...



WHAT IS IT, BULLETT? TRIGGER'S ACTING NERVOUS, TOO! / WONDER---

GRRRRRR! JARRRRHHH!



SUDDENLY, TRIGGER WHIRLS---AND SHES AWAY IN FRIGHT---AT SOMETHING THAT IS NEITHER MAN NOR BEAST!

HAUGH!
WHUFF!

SLOWLY PALELY IN THE DARKNESS, A HULKING FIGURE RISES INTO VIEW.

A WHITE MAN'S
HORSE! THERE IS
A WHITE STRANGER
AMONG YOU,
PEOPLE OF
NAZHINI!

BEAR WALKER! YES---THERE IS A STRANGER---IN THE HOGAN OF NAZHINI! HAVE YOU COME FOR HIM?

BE! BEAR WALKER
IS ANGRY!

KILL THE WHITE MAN---
NOW! OR I WILL SEND THE
SICKNESS---

YOU'LL SEND NOTHING! ARE YOU AFRAID TO TAKE ME ON YOURSELF---LIMPING TONGUE?

GAARR-
RRRRH!

IN THE APPARITION'S "PAW" A GUN BLASTS OUT TWO HURRIED SHOTS.

BANG---
BANG---



THE BEAR
WALKER
IS DOWN!
HE IS NO
SPIRIT!

WE HAVE BEEN DECEIVED!
WE WOULD HAVE KILLED
ROY OUR FRIEND---
AND HIS DOG!



LOOK
WELL, MY
FRIENDS!
DO YOU
RECOGNIZE
HIM?

LIMPING TONGUE! THE HALF-BREED---THE
RENTAGEE! COME BACK HERE TO MAKE
POOLS OF US!

SHOOT HIM,
HUSTEEN NEEH---
HE STOLE OUR
SHEEP!



NO! MURDER WOULD BRING THE LAW UPON YOU, FRIENDS!
BESIDES, I SHALL NEED HIM TO CATCH THE OTHERS!

THE
OTHERS?



THERE WERE THREE MORE IN THE
PARTY OF SOME HUNTERS WHOSE
DEAD HORSES FOULED THE SPRING...
THIS LIMPING TONGUE HAD BANGED
HIS FACE SO YOU WOULD NOT RECOG-
NIZE HIM! NOW
WE SHALL MAKE
HIM TALK!

ANSWER, LIMPING TONGUE---ARE THE THREE WHITE
STRANGERS STILL IN SPIRIT GAVEY? ARE THEY STILL
MAKING POISON FROM SICK SHEEP TO PUT INTO THE
SPRING-THAT-GIVES-UNDERGROUND?

YES!



WHAT OTHER TRAPS, BESIDES THE POISONED
TACKS, ARE THERE IN THE GAVEY? GOME---
SPEAK UP!

THERE ARE---
NONE!



ANNAH! HOSSTEEN NEZH! BRING CLOTH FOR STOPPING THIS RENEGADE'S MOUTH! I AM TAKING HIM TO THE CAVE, AND HE MUST NOT BE ABLE TO GIVE WARNING.



OH-DO! YOU ARE RIGHT! WE WILL BRING GAGE...

ALL RIGHT! NOW---PULL TOGETHER YOUR BEAR WALKER COSTUME, AND PUT ON YOUR MASK!



GUY-LAH!

START MOVING! WE'RE GOING STRAIGHT TO THE CAVE---AND ANYTHING THAT HAPPENS TO ME HAPPENS TO YOU---UNDERSTAND?



AS SILENT AS SHADOWS, THE ARMED AND ANGRY NAVAJOS FOLLOW ROY DOWN THE TRAIL.



AT THE MOUTH OF SPIRIT CAVE, ROY MOTIONS HIS FRIENDS TO WAIT... IF THERE ARE BOOBY TRAPS AHEAD, A CROWD WOULD SURELY SET THEM OFF! AND BESIDES, THEY WEAR NO BOOTS.



TO FEEL, BULLET! OKAY, BEAR WALKER--- MOVE SLOWLY, BECAUSE MY GUN WILL BE POKING AT YOUR RIBS! TAKE ME TO YOUR FRIENDS!



SHUFFLING SLOWLY, BEAR WALKER LEADS ALONG A NARROW PATH THAT WINDS THROUGH THE CARPET OF POISONED TAGES.



IN THE DARKNESS BEYOND THE ENTRANCE, BEAR WALKER STOOPS TO UNTIE A NEARLY INVISIBLE BLACK THREAD.



O-OH! A SET-UP---
 AIMED TO SLOW US IN
 THIS!



KEEP ON, YOU HIRED DOODER! I WANT TO MEET THE BRAINS BEHIND THIS SETUP!



WHAT'S THAT? OH...I KNOW NOW!
IT'S THE WIND THAT BLOWS OUT OF
THIS CAVE---AND MAKES THE INDIANS
THINK OF SPIRITS! SO OH, MASTER
SCAR HUNTER!



I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHERE THAT WIND COMES FROM!
PROBABLY NO ONE WILL EVER FIND OUT!



BEYOND THE
WHISTY GREYCE,
A SHADY
CAVERN OPENS...

HOW I SMELL IT---
GARLIC COOKING!
LEAD ON,
MADDUFF!

AND BEYOND
THE BIG
CAVERN...

THIS SHEEP IS DEAD---READY TO MAKE
MORE GERM CULTURE TO CUMP IN THE
SPRING...

YOU FOOL, ALEX!
DON'T BRING
IT IN HERE
WHERE WE
EAT!

SO! YOU'RE BACK, BEAR WALKER! DID
YOU ORDER AN EXTRA SHEEP FOR
US---AND THROW A GOOD
SCARE INTO THOSE
INDIANS?

HE DID---BUT THE LITTLE GAME IS FINISHED!
REACH HIGH AND QUICK!

AHHHH!

WHO---?





ROY ROGERS

KING OF THE COWBOYS

IN
A CHALLENGE
IN THE BIG BEND

DOWN THERE, TRIGGER, IS A TOWN
THAT THIS FOGGY! IF WE DON'T
COME OUT ALIVE, I RECKON WE'LL
BE FORGOTTEN, TOO

DROPPED INTO A FOLD OF THE BARREN
GIENGA MOUNTAINS OF THE TEXAS BIG BEND,
IS THE TINY TOWN OF CROFTER---WHOSE
MAIN BUSINESS HAS CHANGED FROM MINING
TO HUSTLING TO BRUGGLING---AND NOW
IS AN OPEN QUESTION! A STRANGE SET OF
CIRCUMSTANCES HAS LED ROY TO THIS
DUSTY TRAIL'S END.

I RECKON I'LL TAKE ONE MORE LOOK AT
THIS NOTE, BEFORE WE RIDE IN...I COPIED
IT FROM MY MEMORY OF A NOTE I FOUND
IN THE POCKET OF THAT SABOTEUR
I CAUGHT IN SPIRIT CAVE. TURNED
OVER THE ORIGINAL NOTE TO THE
F.B.I. --

I RECKON "CARVER" IS HIS "COVER NAME" BULLET!
ONE THING IS SURE---HE'S AN ENEMY OF THIS
COUNTRY...AND HIS BUSINESS MAY BE
ANYTHING THAT WILL HURT
THE PEOPLE OF THE U.S.
OR THEIR DEFENSE
EFFORTS! SO HE'S OUR
ENEMY, TOO!

WARR-
RORR!

WHEN YOU LEAVE
PRESENT JOB REFER
TO "CARVER" IN
T.V.A.S.

IT'S A CHALLENGE WE COULDN'T PASS UP, BULLET! A CHALLENGE TO SMELL OUT THIS FOREIGN AGENT AND BREAK UP HIS DIRTY GAME----WHATEVER IT IS!



RIDING INTO CROFTER'S SINGLE STREET, BOY HEADS FOR THE LOVELY BARN....TRIGGER'S NEEDS COME FIRST.

"CHOLLA CURIO COMPANY"
WHAT A NAME!



NOW, I'LL FEED MY OWN FACE----AND MAYBE ASK SOME QUESTIONS.



WHAT'LL IT BE, GONNOR---
HAM, BEEF OR EGGS?

HAM AND EGGS, SISTER---
AND WRECK 'EM! AND COLD
HAM FOR MY DOG!



YOU JUST DRIFTING
THROUGH HANDSOME?
NOT MUCH REAL
GONN BUSINESS
COMES TO TOWN
ANY MORE.

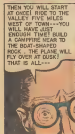
UH-HUH---JUST
DRIFTING! MIGHT
TAKE A JOB WITH
SOME GONN OUTFIT---
OR TRY MY HAND
AT PROSPECTING.



THERE AREN'T
ANY OTHER
INDUSTRIES IN
THIS BOOMING
METROPOLIS,
ARE THERE?

NOPE! NOT UNLESS YOU
COUNT THE CHOLLA CURIO
COMPANY! THEY MAKE
DUDE FURNITURE AND
DODGERS OUT OF DRIED
CHOLLA STEAKS---BUT
THEY HIRE SPANISH
AMERICANS MOSTLY.







TEN MINUTES LATER, LUCK STAYS WITH ROY, AS HE RIDES OUT OF TOWN WITH HIS STILL-LIMP CAPTIVE IN THE SUNKY SACKS.





ROY ROGERS

KING OF THE COWBOYS

IN
COWARD'S CACHE

UNLESS THERE'S A
PASS THROUGH THAT
LONG MESA---



---IT LOOKS AS
IF WE'D LOST OUR
WAY, TRIGGER! THAT'S
WHAT COMES OF TAKING
A SHORT CUT THROUGH
STRANGE COUNTRY! I
RECKON WE WON'T
FIND THE SILVER
STREAM MINE BY
SUNDOWN---



---BUT MAYBE THIS GAP WILL
LEAD OUT TO THE ROAD.



WADA-UP! SOME-
THING ROTTEN IS
GOING ON HERE,
TRIGGER---



DON'T ANSWER ME BACK,
YOU DERNERY PUP!
START TAKIN' DOWN
THAT FENCE, OR
I'LL FUEL YOU---





The force of the impact knocks Haylor clear of his horse...













...and the roar of the spotted beast, as he came on the thundering weapons.



THE TIGER'S DEAD! SEE TO NAYLOR, BEN--WHILE I HAVE A LOOK INSIDE THE HOLE.

HANDS OFF YOUR GUN, NAYLOR!



ANY WELL, BEN! RIGHT AT THE ENTRANCE, WHERE NAYLOR GROOMED IT! WE'LL TURN IT OVER TO THE SHERIFF--



YOU CAN DO THAT RIGHT NOW, MISTER!

SHERIFF GREENE!



---AND I'M GLAD TO KNOW I'M PUTTING THE BRACELETS ON THE RIGHT MAN THIS TIME.

---THANKS TO ROY ROGERS, HERE!

NO? THANKS TO A CONSIDERABLE FEAR OF GETTING CAUGHT! NAYLOR SHOWED US HIS CACHE--



---AND GOT HIS CONVICTION! ALL THE SAME, IF YOUR TWO GUNS HADN'T LOADED THAT CAT DOWN WITH LEAD, ROGERS, IT WOULD HAVE KILLED NAYLOR, AND MAYBE BEN, TOO! I GOT HERE TOO LATE TO HAVE HELPED THEM!

ANYHOW, IT TURNED OUT RIGHT, SHERIFF!

ROY ROGERS

KING OF THE COWBOYS

A CAMP OF CRIPPLED WAGON-TRAMPERS! A POOR PLACE TO ASK FOR HELP BUT---

IN
ROY PLAYS
A HUNCH

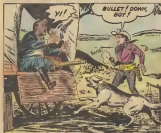
MY NAME'S ROGERS--- A FRIEND OF LEW COBLESS, KNOWS LAND YOU ARE CAMPING ON / ONE OF LEW'S COWS IS CAUGHT IN A DEEP WASH, NEAR HERE--- TOO DEEP FOR ANY ONE HORSE TO HELP HER / BUT WITH YOUR TEAM---

WHY? OUR HORSES ARE LAME, MISTER!

LAME HORSES COULD DO THIS JOB--- AND IT WOULD SORT OF PAY LEW COBLESS FOR YOUR CAMPING PRIVILEGES / BETTER THINK OF THAT, TOO!

HEY! DROP THAT YOU! DROP IT!

DROP IT, DADDY! YOU---OR ILL---















AND LOOK HERE! HERE'S THIS ONE'S *midnight* MAN—PERFECTLY GOOD, BUT TUCKED SOMEBODY INSIDE HIS SHIRT! HAW, HAW!



SAY! I RECKON "BULLET" HAS FOUND SOMETHING, TOO! LOOKS LIKE THOSE BANDANA MASKS!

UH-HUH—UH?



KEEP THOSE BIRDS COVERED, LEW! I WANT TO HAVE A LOOK IN HERE MYSELF!

OKAY!



HERE'S THE GOOD WHEEL THEY TOOK OFF—TO MAKE IT LOOK AS IF THEY'D BROKEN DOWN! I RECKON THE EVIDENCE IS COMPLETE ENOUGH FOR ANY JURY NOW!



SADDLE UP, BANK ROBBERS—FOR A TRIP TO DALL!

I WANT TO SEE THE SHERIFF'S FACE WHEN HE HEARS ABOUT THIS, ROY! HE SAID WE'D BE CHASING GASSIES FOLLOWING BULLET!



THAT'S BECAUSE HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THE WAY I DO! WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER PRETTY WELL—DON'T WE, BARNER?

YARR!

The OREGON TRAIL



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Bobby Mackay held tightly to his small sister's hand, as the rough plank box was lowered into the grave. Susan was sniffing, and even wee Mary the two-year-old was whimpering a little, but Bobby was ten years old, and the man of the family now. He couldn't cry. Not even if it was his own Dad in that rough plank box!

But Bobby could and did remember his Dad's words: "Care for your wee sisters, say your prayers, and keep your eyes on the trail ahead! The Oregon Trail, Bobby, lad!"

A big hand pressed gently on Bobby's shoulder, and a man's voice spoke kindly. "There's room in our wagon for you three, Bobby Mackay! Move your things tonight, for we start for California in the morning."

Bobby swallowed hard—and found his voice.

"Thank ye kindly, Mister Dakin," he replied. "But we three will keep our own wagon, and the Oregon Trail. It was Dad's wish."

"You cannot!" Dakin, the bearded pioneer said sharply. "None of our company are headed for Oregon. And when we picked you up, with your broken-down wagon, your own wagon train was already too far ahead to overtake. Now, let's have no more foolish talk, Bobby! If you children wish, you may sleep in your own wagon tonight. In the morning I'll try to find a driver for it."

The gruff, well-meaning man turned away. He did not see Bobby's small fist clench with

determination—or the rebellious look on his face.

In the morning's bustle the Mackay wagon was more or less forgotten. That suited Bobby perfectly. He could have harnessed the four mules as quickly as most men could, but he deliberately took more time. When the long wagon train swung into the branch of the trail that led to California, his wagon fell in behind all the others. Mr. Dakin did ride back to make sure it was following, and give Bobby a nod of approval—but that was all. The little girls on the seat watched the rider with solemn eyes, as he reined away.

"Are we truly on the Oregon Trail?" asked Sue of her "big" brother.

"No," replied Bobby, with a frown. "But we will be! We can't turn back now, or they'd chase us and take the wagon away from us. But our time will come."

The chance came on the second day.

The next wagon ahead was pulling out of sight as Bobby's entered the deepest gully of all. There was water flowing, a few inches deep at the bottom—enough to hide the tracks of a dozen horses. Bobby stopped his team there.

One by one, he unharnessed them, and cinched on the three pack saddles that his father had always carried in the wagon. On the pack saddles he tied the sacks that held the clothes, food, blankets and equipment most needed. A light load for fast traveling!

On the fourth mule he placed his father's riding saddle—and mounted, with Wee Mary the baby in front of him.

Susan, already astride the next mule's load, picked up her reins.

"Follow me as close as you can, Sue," her brother commanded. "We'll hide farther down the gully. The water will hide our tracks. After dark we'll come back and head for OREGON!"

All that night Bobby rode, with Baby Mary held snugly in the crook of his arm. At his knee, in the saddle's built-in holster, bulged the big cavalry pistol, with its five chambers loaded, and its copper percussion caps in place. Bobby's Dad had let him fire it many times, holding it weight in both hands. Sometime in the days and nights to come, it might save him and his sisters from the sneaking Digger Indians.

For the next two weeks they rode mostly at night—whenever the rutted Oregon Wagon Trail could be followed by moonlight. Sue was tied to her pack saddle, so that she could sleep without falling off. The mules traveled fast—on the three sacks of grain they carried, while it lasted—without grain when it was gone. They made thirty miles before stopping. At the end of two weeks they were slowing down, but the wagon tracks ahead of them were fresh!

Their own wagon train was just ahead!

In the morning they saw its dust, rising beyond a long hill. The hill rose from a forked valley, where trees and brush grew, and the wagon tracks wound up the long slope.

Tears of relief started down Bobby Mackey's duck-baked cheeks. He was thin and tender even than his sister Sue. That dust cloud ahead meant people—their own people! And safety, and food and rest! Bobby wanted to shout and laugh and cry, all at once, until he saw—

Painted Indians, riding up the two draws that flanked the hill. They were going to take the wagon train by surprise—unless he warned it! Unless he timed it right—and GOT THROUGH.

When the last Indian was nearly out of sight, Bobby drew his cavalry pistol, and kicked his mount into a run. Tied in line, the other mules followed.

Indian whoops and the ZIP-ZIP of arrows overtook him as he topped the hill. But the Emigrant Train was in sight now. They had heard his warning shots. They were forming a wagon circle! Armed men were riding out to meet the racing mules!

And so it was that Bobby Mackey and his small sisters earned their welcome—on THE OREGON TRAIL!



CHUCKWAGON CHARLEY'S TALES

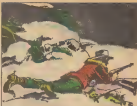


A TAWNY SHADOW, THE LYNX BOUNDS OUT OF SIGHT





"I HAD A LITTLE COY-OUTFIT OF MY OWN, UP IN IDAHO, THE SPRING WHEN IT HAPPENED...A PAIR OF BIG CANADA LYNXES, OR LUCIVES, STARTED KILLING MY CALVES.



"KNOWING THAT A LUCIVEE WILL COME BACK TO A FRESH KILL FOR ANOTHER MEAL, I PICKED A PLACE DOWNWIND FROM THE CALF, AND WAITED FOR MOONLIGHT

"I NEVER KNEW WHERE THEY CAME FROM, BUT ALL OF A SUDDEN, THEY WERE THERE, BESIDE THE DEAD CALF, LOOKING AROUND WITH THEIR COLO, YELLOW EYES



"I CUT LOOSE WITH MY RIFLE, BUT MOONLIGHT IS TRICKY, AND I ONLY BURNED THE MALE LUCIVEE'S RUMP.

"THEY VANISHED LIKE A COUPLE OF PUFFS OF DUST - AND I NEVER GOT ANOTHER SHOT AT THEM THAT YEAR



"THEY KILLED MY STOCK OFF AND ON, ALL SUMMER AND FALL, WHENEVER ANY CRITTER GOT NEAR TO THE WOODS, AND SOMETIMES WHEN IT DIDN'T!"



"BY THE NEXT SPRING I WAS DESPERATE! I KNEW THOSE LUCIVEES WOULD CUT MY SMALL CALF CROP DOWN TO NOTHING IF I DON'T GET THEM FIRST - SO I SPENT MOST OF MY TIME HUNTING 'EM



ONE DAY I FOUND A HOLE IN THE ROCKS, WITH LYNX TRACKS LEADING IN AND OUT, IN THE FRESH SNOW! I'D FOUND THE SHE-LUCIVEE'S DEN, ANYHOW.



"I CRAWLED IN. MRS. LYNX WASN'T AT HOME..."



"... BUT HER KITTENS WERE! THE LITTLE MISCHIEFS STOOD HUMPING THEIR BACKS UP AND SPITTING AT ME LIKE GROWN-UP LUCIVEES! I SURE LIKED THEIR SPUNK, AND HATED THE THOUGHT OF KILLING 'EM."



"I WRAPPED ONE OF 'EM UP IN MY COAT, SO HE COULDN'T CLAW ME."



AND TOOK HIM HOME! I FIGURED TO COME BACK WITH A STRONG BASKET AND GET THE OTHERS... MAYBE A CITY SPORT WOULD BUY THEM OFF ME, FOR A GOOD PRICE."

DID YOU SELL THEM ALL, CHARLEY?
NOPE! ONLY THE FIRST ONE! WHEN I GOT BACK TO THE DEN, THE OLD SHE HAD MOVED! THE OTHERS NEXT TIME I SAW 'EM THEY WERE GROWNUP, AND KILLED OFF A LOT MORE OF MY STOCK!



"IT WAS THE FOLLOWING SPRING... ABOUT THE TIME THE MULE DEER HAVE THEIR LITTLE FAINS... I GLIMPSED A MOVEMENT DOWN IN A DEEP WOODY GULCH, AND PUT MY BINOCULARS ON IT



"THERE WAS A NEWBORN MULE ODER FAWN, IN A HOLLOW AT THE FOOT OF A CLIFF... AND ITS MOTHER WAS LICKING IT DRY.

"AS I WATCHED, THE DOE SPUN AROUND WITH A WHISTLE OF FRIGHT AND ANGER! I SAW WHAT THE TROUBLE WAS... A PAIR OF LYNXES CROUCHED NOT THIRTY FEET FROM HER!"



"I COULD SCARE THOSE CATS WITH A SHOT... BUT MY WINCHESTER CARBINE WASN'T LONG RANGE ENOUGH TO HIT 'EM. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF I LET 'EM MAKE THEIR KILL, MAYBE I COULD SNEAK UP AND NAIL 'EM BOTH!



"I COULDN'T MAKE UP MY MIND WHAT TO DO... SO I TOOK ANOTHER LOOK THROUGH MY GLASSES.



"THIS TIME I SAW TWO MULE DEER! ONE WAS A BIG BUCK.. WITHOUT HORNS, OF COURSE, SEEMS IT WAS SPRINGTIME! THE DOE'S WHISTLE HAD BROUGHT HIM TO PROTECT HER AND THE FAWN.



"THE NEXT THING I SAW MADE ME BLINK AND LOOK AGAIN. FIVE OF THE CATS WERE CREEPING UP ON THE DEER. THE TWO OLD ONES, AND THE CUBS TO MESS UP KILLING IN THEIR DENT.



"NUMBERS GAVE THOSE LUCYVEES COURAGE THAT A PAIR OF 'EM MIGHT NOT HAVE SHOWN. A MULEY'S HOOF CAN SLASH LIKE KNIVES WITH THREE HUNDRED POUNDS OF MUSCLE BEHIND THEM! TWO JUMPED FOR THE BUCK... ANOTHER THE DOE



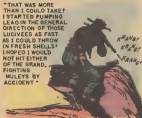
"THE BUCK KNOCKED ONE CAT SPINNING! THE SECOND GOT A CLAW HOLD ON HIS NECK.



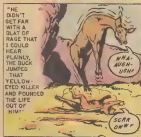
"THE DOE WAS GOING ALL RIGHT, TOO...



...UNTIL SHE LOWERED HER GUARD TO SAVE HER FAWN. THEN ONE OF THE YOUNG LYNXES LANDED ON HER BACK.



"THAT WAS MORE THAN I COULD TAKE! I STARTED PUMPING LEAD IN THE GENERAL DIRECTION OF THOSE LUCYVEES AS FAST AS I COULD THROW IN FRESH SHELLS! I HOPED I WOULD NOT HIT EITHER OF THE GRAND, FIGHTING MULEYS BY ACCIDENT."



BARBED WIRE



WHEN JOSEPH F. GLIDDEN INVENTED BARBED WIRE, FARMERS AND RANCHERS PUT IT TO USE AS QUICKLY AS THEY COULD. MOST OF THE NATION'S CATTLE RANCHING WAS DONE IN AREAS WHERE TREES WERE VERY SCARCE—LUMBER FOR FENCES WAS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO OBTAIN BUT THREE STRANDS OF BARBED WIRE, BOUND TOGETHER BY THE POINT-ED BARBS THEMSELVES COULD HOLD BACK THE FIERCEST LONGHORN STEER. GLIDDEN'S INVENTION CAUSED TWO THINGS—THE END OF OPEN RANGE RANCHING AND LOTS OF BLOODSHED. CATTLEMEN RESENTED THE USE OF BARBED WIRE BY FARMERS BECAUSE IT PREVENTED THE FREE PASSAGE OF TRAIL HERDS. RANCHERS FOUGHT AMONG THEMSELVES. BIG RANCH COMBINES, WITH ENOUGH GRASS, FENCED THEIR LAND AND KEPT THE SMALL RANCHERS OUT. RANGE WAR AFTER RANGE WAR HELPED TO WEAKEN THE OLD-FASHIONED CATTLE INDUSTRY.

TODAY, MOST STATES HAVE TAKEN THE FREE RANGE LAWS OFF THEIR STATUTE BOOKS AND BARBED WIRE IS THE MEANS BY WHICH RANCHERS MAKE THEIR PROPERTY LINES OBSERVED. EVEN IN THE MODERN WEST, ANYONE CAUGHT CUTTING FENCE IS IN FOR LOTS OF TROUBLE.





PREACHER ROE

SPARKS in Pitching Duel!

IT'S THE 14TH INNING OF A GRUELING PITCHER'S BATTLE, DODGERS LEAD 2 TO 1. BUT PREACHER ROE IS IN TROUBLE!....

WITH RUNNERS ON FIRST AND SECOND, 2 OUT, ROE WINDS UP!



OH MY! -HOPE I'M NOT TIRING!



HURRY THROW IT! HE'S GONNA STEAL!

LOOK OUT! IT'S A PASSED BALL!



COME ON, PREACHER, SPARK IT UP!

SAFE!



3 BALLS 2 STRIKES! PAY-OFF PITCH COMING UP!

GOT ENOUGH LEFT FOR A FAST BALL? I'LL TRY!



STRIKE 3! YOU'RE OUT!

WOOHAY! DODGERS WIN!

WOW! WHAT A SPARK!



GEE, SOME FAST BALL, PREACHER!

YEAH, AND IN THE 14TH INNING! HOW DO YOU DO IT?

KEEPING IN TRAINING, INCLUDING LOTS OF WHEATIES!



WHY WHEATIE?

FOR WHEAT POWER! AND THERE'S A WHOLE KERNEL OF WHEAT IN EVERY WHEATIES FLAKE!



WHAT SPARKS A CHAMPION SPARKS YOU!

AND CHAMPIONS CHOOSE WHEATIES! BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS!